

Writing in the First-Year Seminar

A National Snapshot

Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience

February 16, 2014



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FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

WHY FOCUS ON WRITING IN THE SEMINAR?



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Faculty Assessment of Student Writing

	FY/Sophomore	Junior/Senior
Use paragraphs	2.71	2.97
Write for different audiences	2.66	2.97
Develop a main idea	2.57	2.90
Write for different purposes	2.52	2.93
Organize a paper	2.49	2.91
Use supporting evidence	2.43	2.77
Use correct grammar and syntax	2.42	2.71
Employ correct mechanics (e.g., spelling)	2.39	2.85
Record data and/or use detail	2.37	2.87
Synthesize information from multiple sources	2.28	2.70
Analyze data/ideas/argument	2.20	2.73
Quote and paraphrase appropriately	2.13	2.63
Use, cite, and document sources	2.03	2.63

Effects of Good Writing Practices on Seniors

- Deep Learning
 - Higher-order thinking
 - Integrative learning
 - Reflective learning
- Other outcomes
 - Personal and social development
 - Practical competence
 - General education

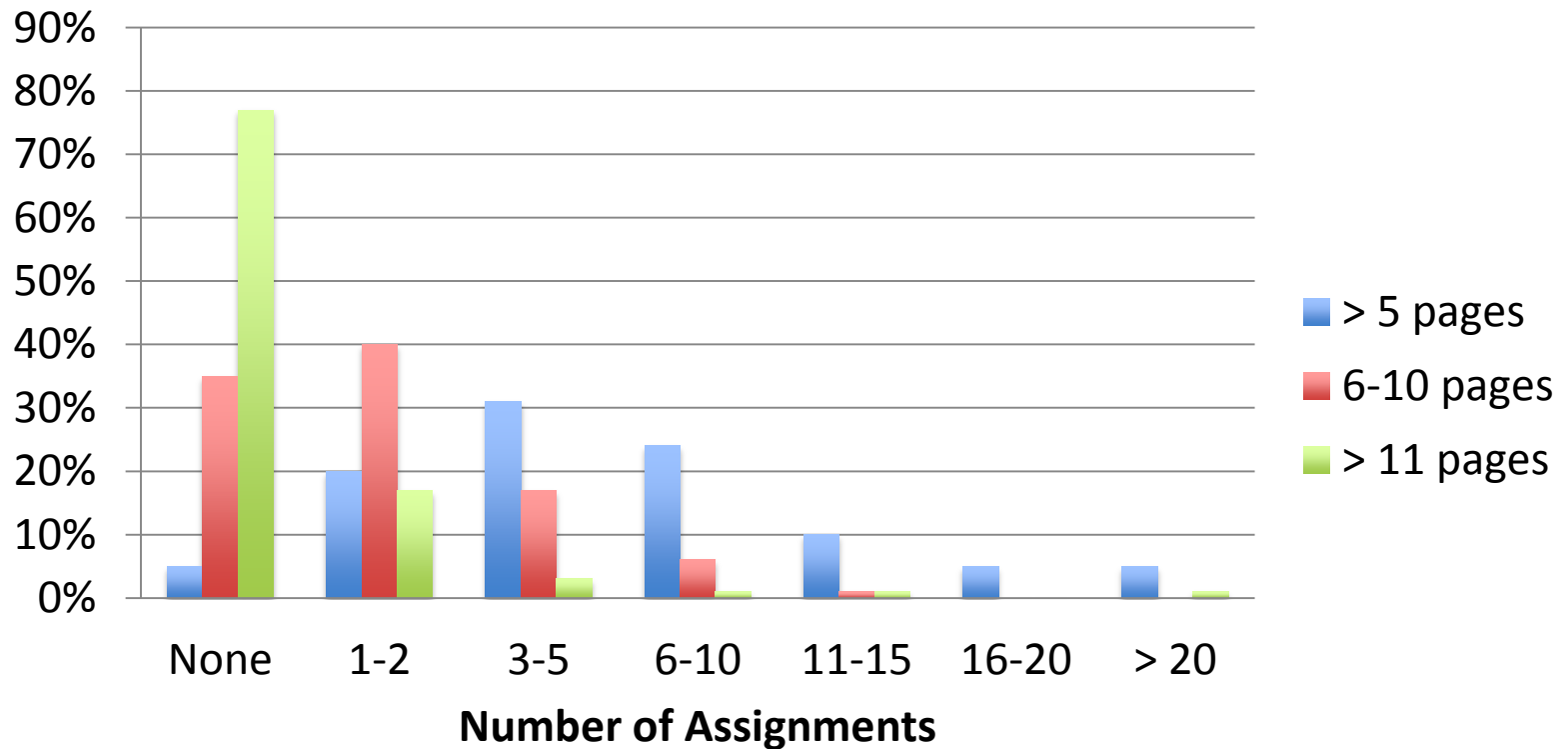
Source: NSSE. (2008). *Promoting Results for All Students: The Imperative to Look Within.*



Embedding Writing Instruction in the First-Year Seminar

- Avoids perception of remediation
- Changes faculty & student views about writing and education in general
- “Introduc[es] students to academic discourse in a research-intensive context” (Brent, 2005, p. 263)
- Accomplishes WAC goals “in a WAC-resistant environment” (Brent, p. 264)
- Enhances faculty development opportunities

How Much Are Students Writing?



Source: NSSE 2013 Frequency
Distributions by Class and Gender.

Writing Experiences in the First Year

- Prepared 2 or more drafts of a paper—51% (*often or very often*)
- Received feedback from faculty on draft or work in progress—65% (*quite a bit or very much*)

Source: NSSE 2013 Frequency
Distributions by Class and Gender.



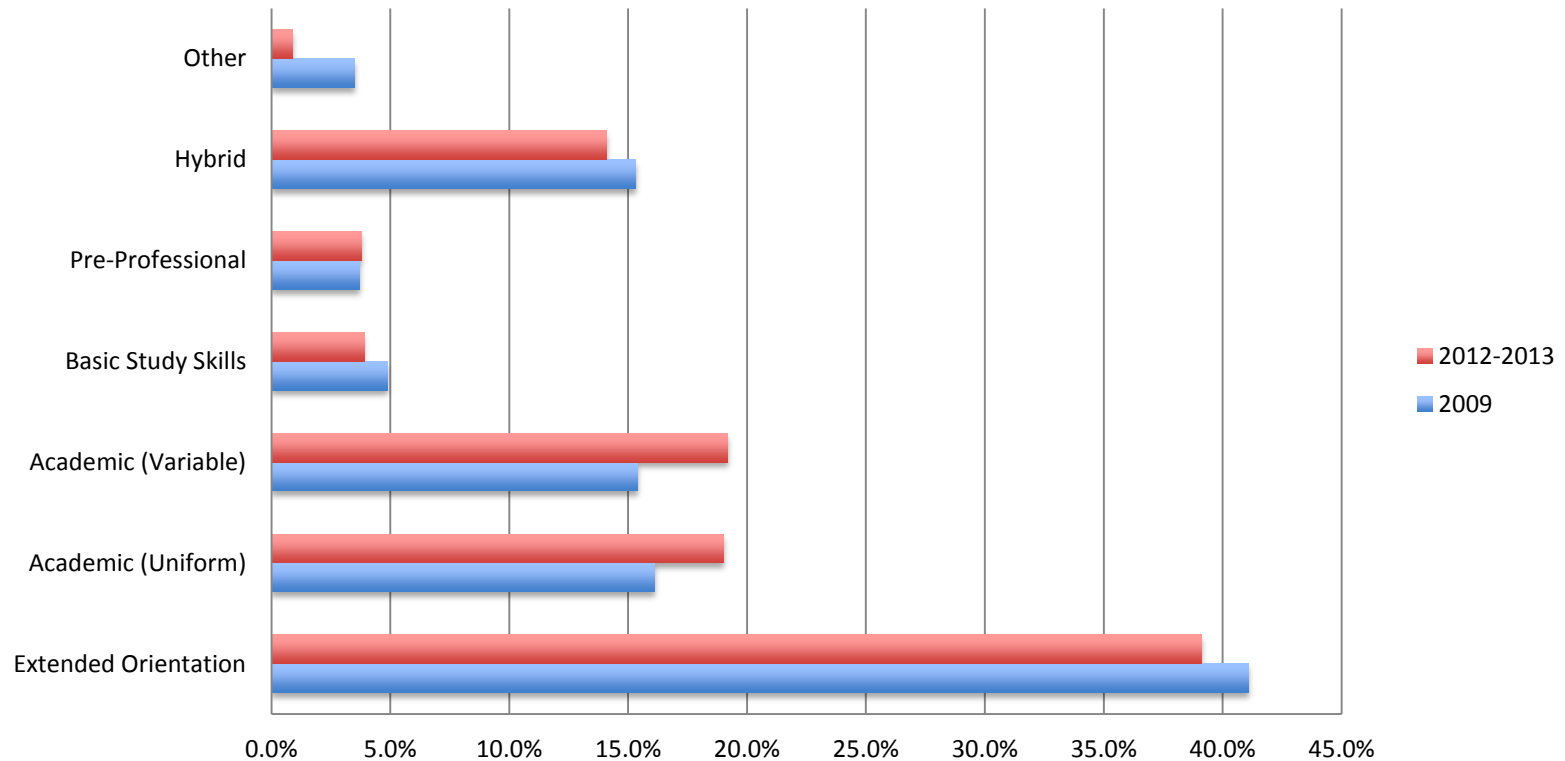
What Are Students Writing?

Assignment Type	Most/All Writing Assignments	Mean
Summary	54%	3.36
Analysis or evaluation	60%	3.66
Description of methods or findings (student data)	33%	2.83
Argument	51%	3.41
Explain numerical/statistical data	22%	2.47
Discipline-specific writing	36%	2.92
Addressed real or imagined audience	38%	3.01

Source: NSSE 2013 Topical Module:
Experiences with Writing



Types of First-Year Seminars



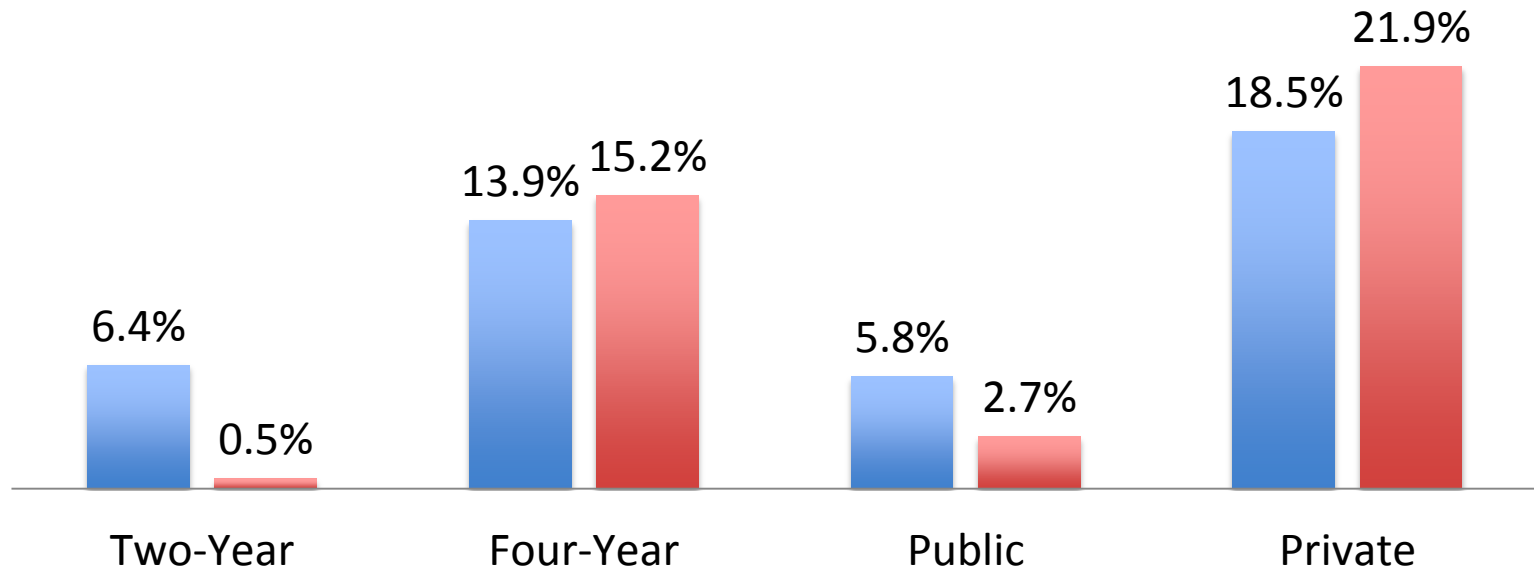
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Writing Skill as Seminar Goal

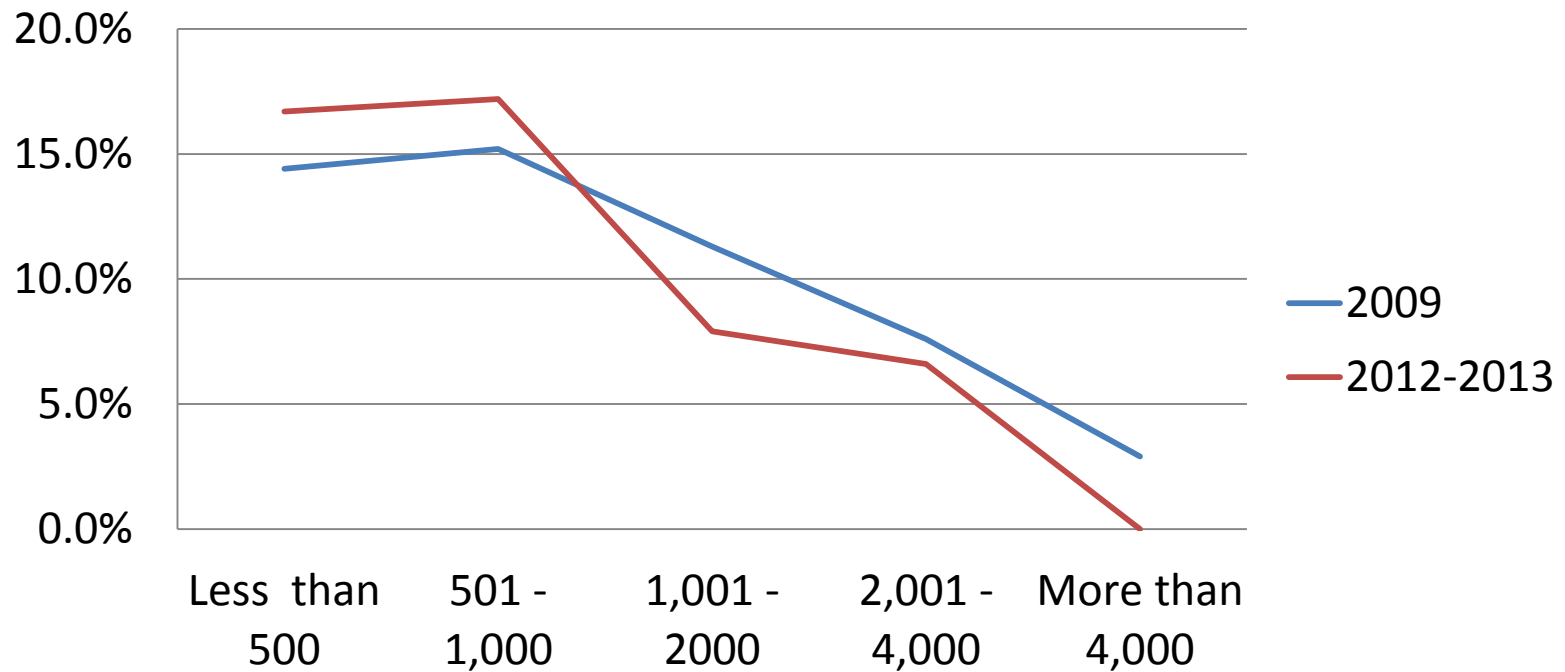
By Institutional Type and Control

■ 2009 ■ 2012-2013



Writing Skills as a Seminar Goal

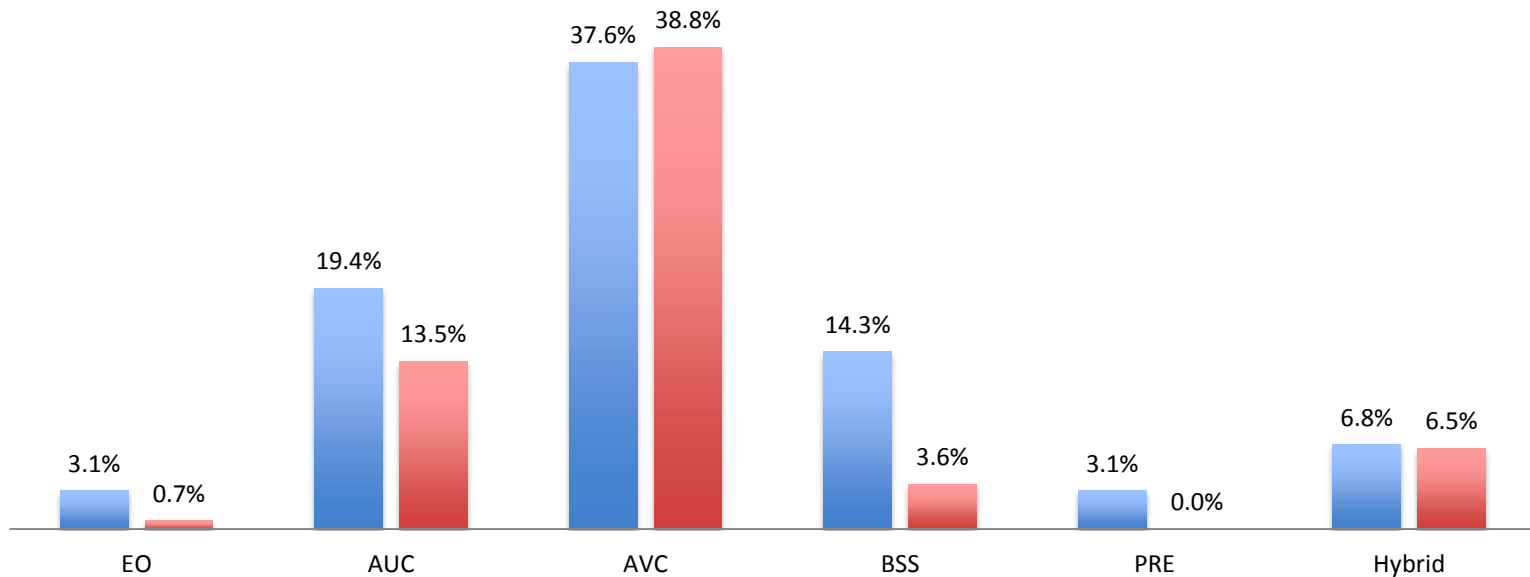
By First-Year Class Size



Writing Skills as a Seminar Goal

By Seminar Type

■ 2009 ■ 2012-2013



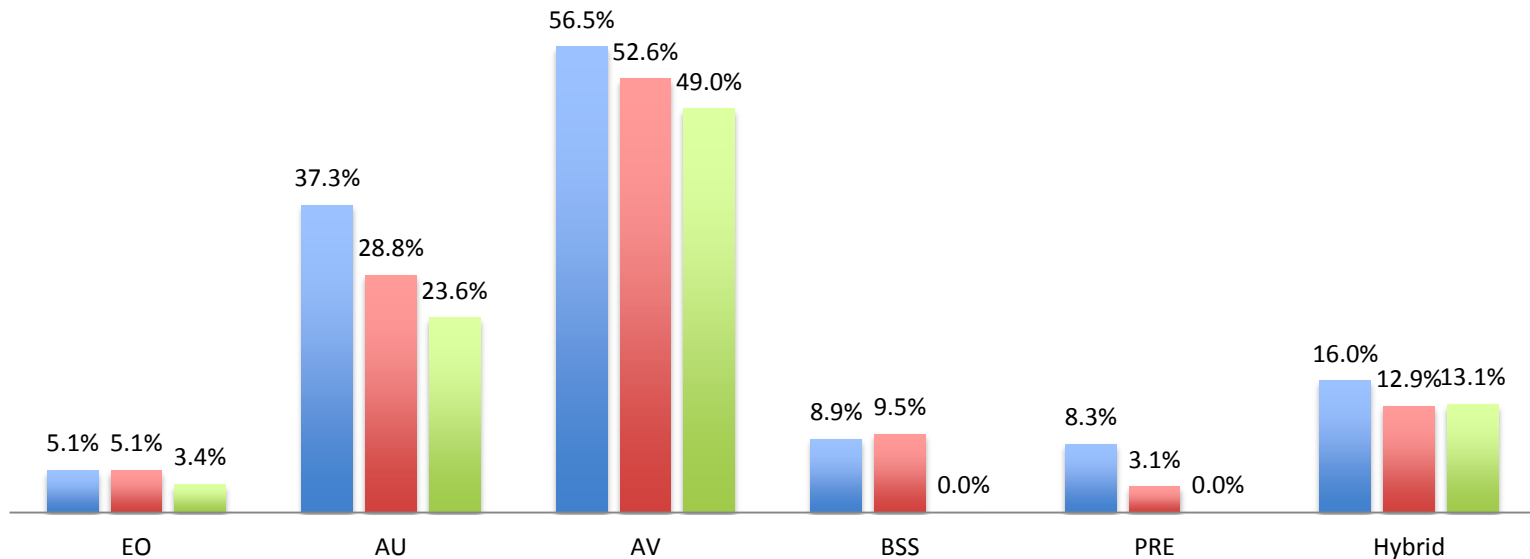
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Writing Skills as Course Topic

By Seminar Type

■ 2006 ■ 2009 ■ 2012-2013

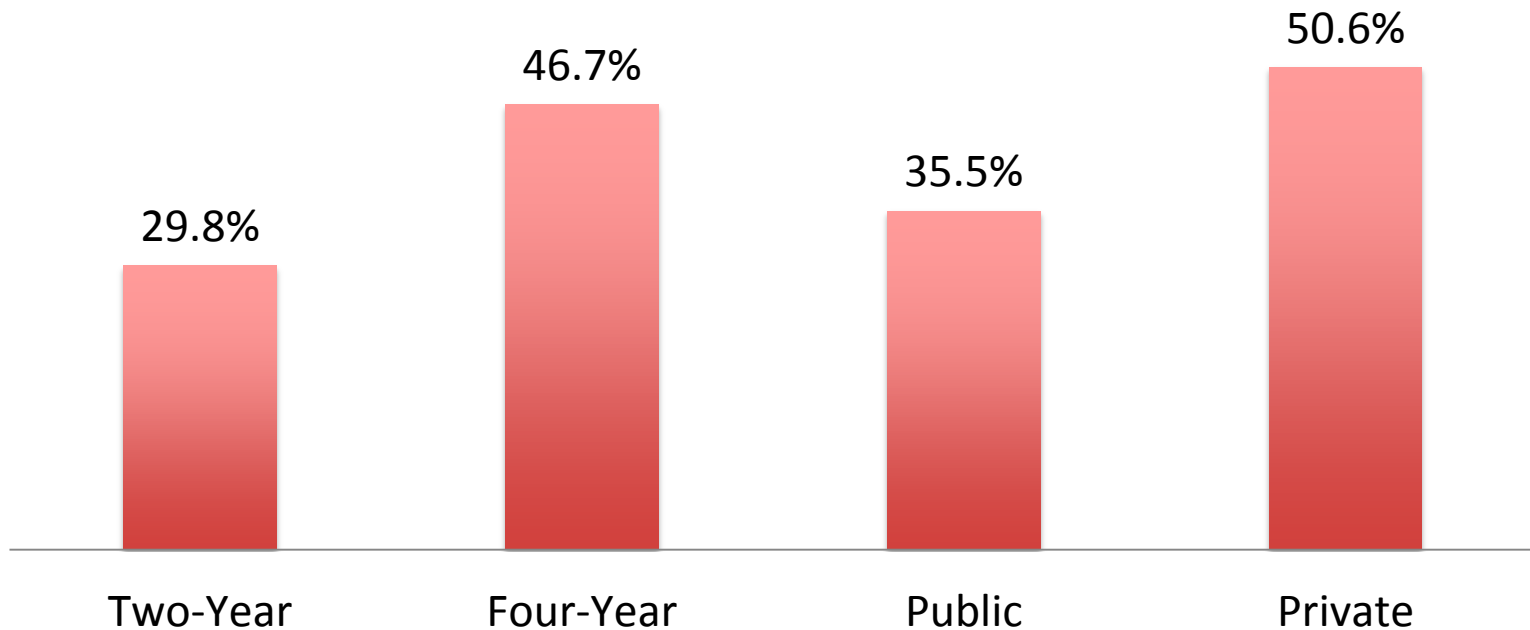


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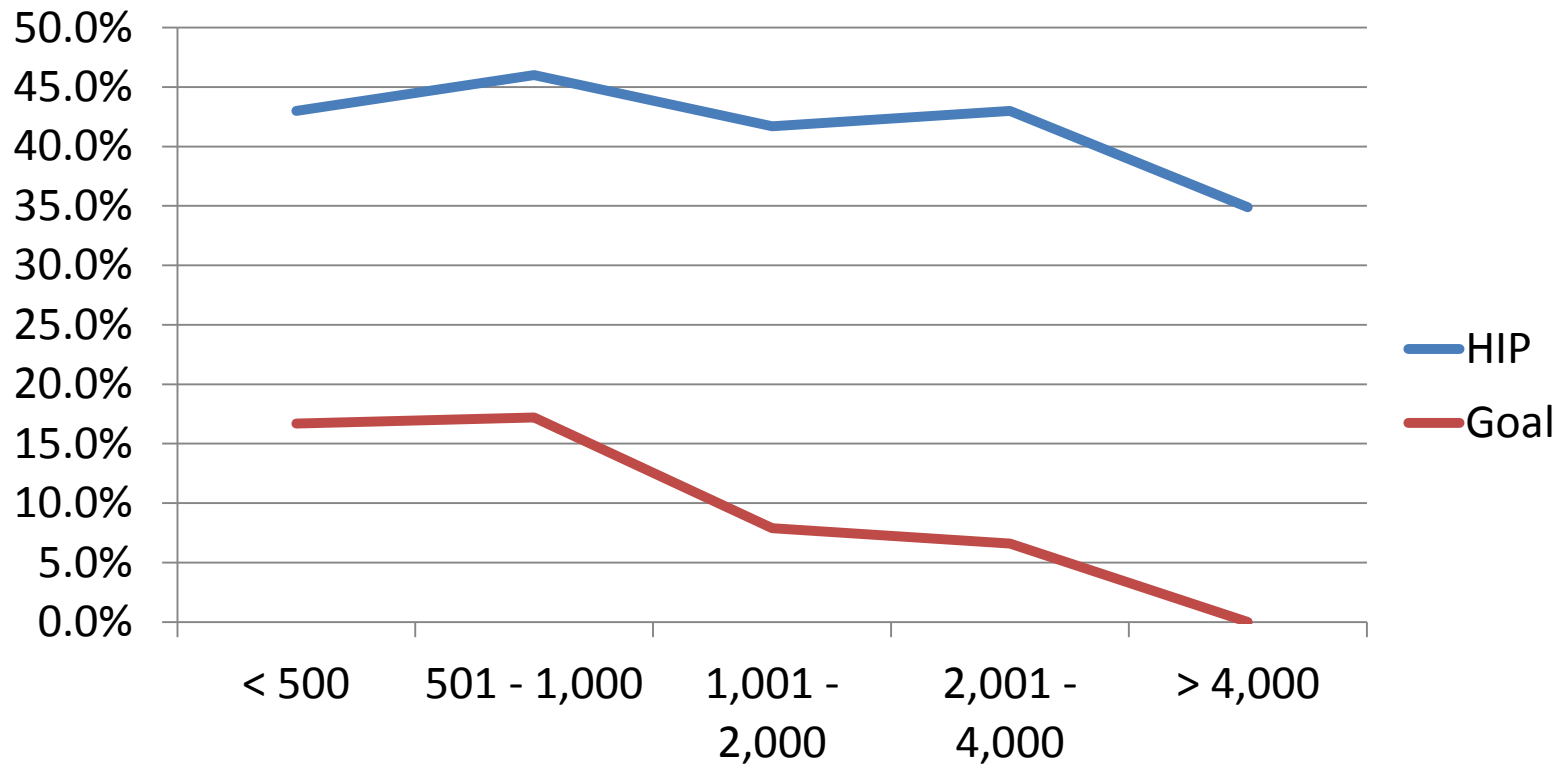
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Opportunities to Produce & Revise Writing

Writing as HIP



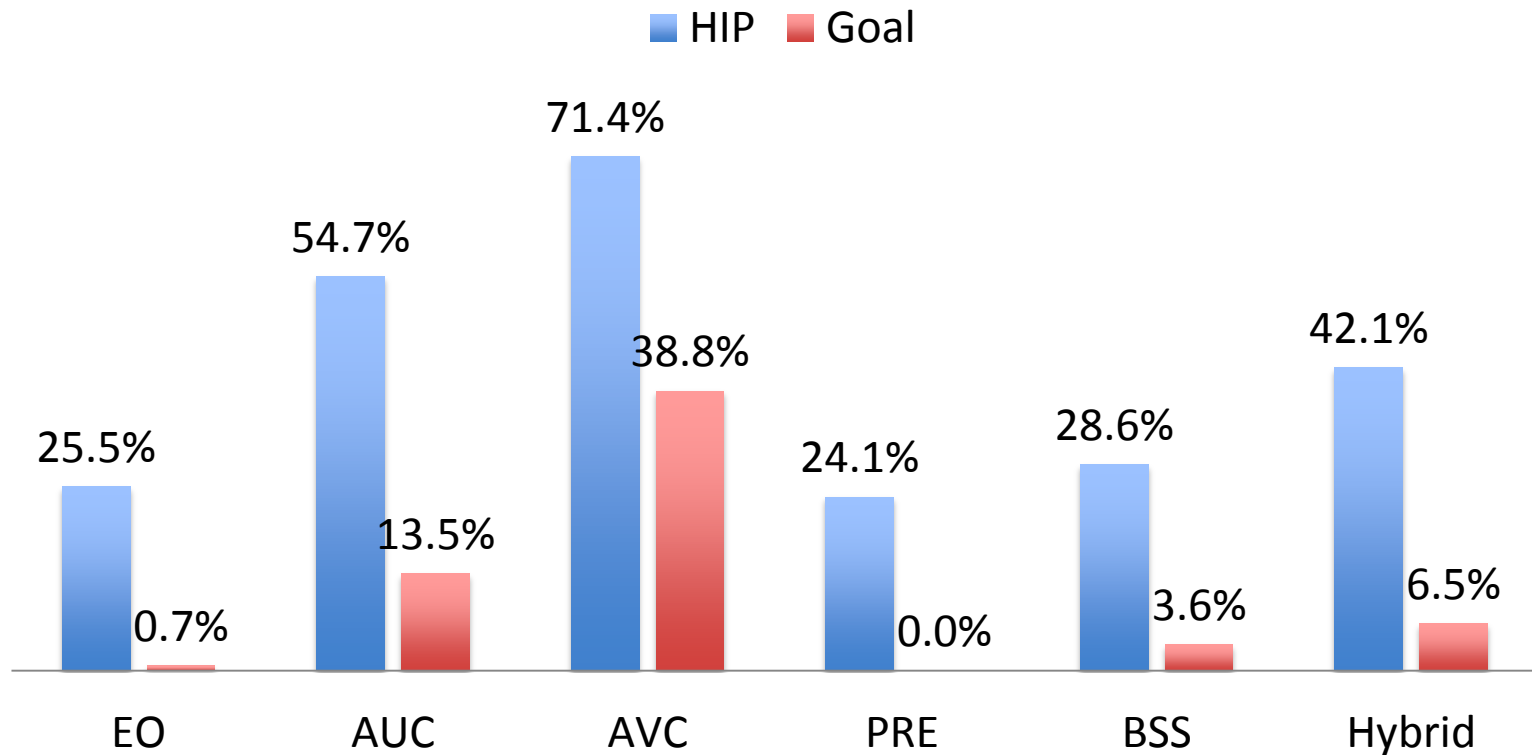
Opportunities to Produce & Revise Writing



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Opportunities to Produce & Revise Writing



Where Do We See The Emphasis on Writing

- In academic seminars of both types ($p < .05$)
 - Less likely in extended orientation and pre-professional seminars ($p < .05$)
- When section size is less than 19 ($p < .001$)
- When tenure-track faculty serve as course instructors ($p < .001$)
 - Less likely when student affairs professionals are instructors ($p < .001$)



Evidence of Meaning-Making Assignments

	EO <i>(n = 75)</i>	AUC <i>(n = 81)</i>	AVC <i>(n = 105)</i>	Hybrid <i>(n = 45)</i>
Research paper	4	18	31	11
Expository writing	9	17	11	7
Article review, critique, analysis	4	19	13	11
Argument	0	2	7	1
Discipline-specific writing assignments	0	0	0	1

Other Types of Writing Assignments

	EO (n = 75)	AUC (n = 81)	AVC (n = 105)	Hybrid (n = 45)
Journal	21	18	6	12
Career exploration/academic planning	16	10	1	3
Personal exploration/reflection	22	20	6	13
Electronic writing	5	6	3	2
Response papers	22	14	19	11
Analysis of inventories	4	2	0	0
Career-related documents	3	3	1	0
Business writing	2	1	0	0

Evidence of Clear Expectations

- 44.3% of institutions that report seminars provides opportunities to produce and revise writing also assess writing as a course outcome
- 88.3% of institutions that identify development of writing skills also assess writing as a course outcome



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